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ABSTRACT

A study examined the particular variables utilized in argumentative spots (political advertisements that attempt to tell the audience where the candidate stands on particular topics) of the 1984 GOP senatorial hopefuls, in an attempt to ascertain if any advantages were manifested in different commercial patterns in content and format of the ads across geographical regions. The study investigated three salient characteristics that influenced the overall success of argumentative spots (otherwise known as arg-spots) which include issue, image, and visibility. Twenty-nine arg-spots were analyzed in light of these characteristics, and were broken down into four geographic regions--north, south, midwest, and west. Twelve variables, including primary topic issue, use of endorsement, and symbolic artifacts were evaluated for the arg-spots from each region, and similarities and distinctions across geo-regions were noted. Analysis revealed that from the perspective of the political campaign as an argumentative conflict made manifest through the mediated debate, the arg-spot played an important role in presenting selected and well-crafted arguments to the voting public. Findings suggests that arg-spots represent a positive step in re-establishing a healthy mediated deliberative diet for the voting public. (Ten tables are included, and 36 footnotes are appended.) (MM)

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MEDIATED ARGUMENTATIVE SPOTS IN THE 1984 SENATORIAL CAMPAIGN: FRAMING THE CAMPAIGN AGENDA

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MEDIATED ARGUMENTATIVE SPOTS IN THE 1984 SENATORAL CAMPAIGN: FRAMING THE CAMPAIGN AGENDA

> Today's argument spots in political campaigns - the non- specific, short quips on a particular position that sometimes touch a hot button, or make issue-oriented points are frequently the closest the public will get to the candidate's stand on the issues.(1)
>
> Edwin Diamond

The dependence and use of television spots in today's political campaign continues to be a subject of intense discussion and debate. Proponents credit television with bringing the campaign into a vast number of households, with the goal being a more informed public, and hopefully a more deliberative decision-making process on election day. (2) Skeptics of this viewpoint raise questions on the quality and utility of the information presented in the the sixty second, thirty second, or most recently, the ten second polispot.(3)

While the argument will undoubtedly continue on the merits of political spots, and legislation periodically will be proposed to

"curb" what Joslyn describes as "one of the few forms of communication over which the the candidate has almost complete control," the political spot reigns as a dominant ingredient in today's contemporary campaign.(4)

Diamond and Bates maintain that in the absence of formal debates, which candidates often shun for a variety of reasons, such political advertisements, and particularly the argumentative spots, serve as "the closest the public will get to the candidate's stand on the issues." (5) From the perspective of the political campaign as an argumentative conflict manifested through the mass-mediated debate, the arg-spot plays a vital role in advancing the claim that one candidate is best suited for office.

For the purpose of this paper, **argumentative spots** are defined as political advertisements that attempt **to tell the audience where the candidate stands on particular topics of interest, deemed important by the candidate.**(6) Subject matter consists of national or parochial issues, personal characteristics, partisan appeals, demographic or particular constituent appeals. In contrast to the growing trend of attack spots which focus on one's opposition and are negative in tone, arg-spots frequently assert the positive characteristics of the candidate sponsoring the advertisement.

This work proceeds from the Payne/Baukus trend summary of 101 GOP

television senatorial spots for the 1984 national campaign.(7) Of the senatorial ads, negative and argument ads were the two most frequently used spots. Negative polispots were explored in subsequent research by Baukus/Payne/Reisler.(8)

The 101 spots were originally classified into discrete categories as outlined by Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates - Identification, Argument, Attack or Negative, and Resolution.(9) Given their significance as the mediated argumentative link between the candidate and the voter, a more in-depth examination of these argument spots will comprise the focus of this paper. A subfile of 29 senatorial ads classified as argument spots are analyzed.

Purpose

The objective of this paper is to examine the arg-spot from a number of differing perspectives. A brief history of the arg-spot is followed by an inquiry into questions of content, strategy and style. More specifically, a content analysis examines how particular variables were utilized in the arg-spots of the 1984 GOP senatorial hopefuls, and attempts to identify if any advantages are manifested in different commercial patterns in content and format of the ads across geo-regions, i.e., north, south, midwest, and west. The variables examined include: Geographic Distribution of Argument spots; Depth of Coverage of Content Issue; Primary Topic Issue; Use of Endorsement; Endorser Time; Use of the President; Symbolic Artifacts; Location Context;

Social Context; Candidate on Camera Time; Length of Arg Spot; and the Verbal Mention of Candidate Name. In addition, viewpoints of the actual designers of such deliberative data will be presented in order to provide the political consultant's "hands-on" perspective on the function of the arg-spot in the contemporary campaign. Finally, a discussion ensues on the implictions of this arg-spot research.

History of the Argument Spot

Since its first use in the 1950's, the argument spot as been the predominant type of political advertisement on television. In their work, The Spot, Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates trace this type of political advertisement to the first political contest with a heavy use of television - the presidential campaign of 1952.(10) Both candidates, Governor Adlai Stevenson of Illinois and General Dwight D. Eisenhower opted to take their argumentative message to the people by way of broadcast television. Under the supervision of Thomas Rosser Reeves, Jr., a brilliant Madison Avenue advertising executive, General Eisenhower filmed over forty arg-spots for the campaign, all in one day.

These Ike arg-spots featured a typical voter, plucked from a group of tourists visiting New York City, posing a particular question identified as important to the public, according to the

expertise of George Gallup. In such spots, later to be characterized as the "talking heads" format, Eisenhower was featured in a studio library setting,framing his particular position on the issue for the viewing pubic:

VIDEO	AUDIO
SLIDE: "EISENHOWER ANSWERS AMERICA," WITH OVAL PHOTO OF EISENHOWER. IN FINE PRINT AT BOTTOM OF SCREEN: "A POLITICAL ANNOUNCEMENT PAID FOR BY CITIZENS FOR EISENHOWER."	ANNOUNCER (VO): "EISENHOWER ANSWERS AMERICA."
CUT FROM OPENING TO WELL-DRESSED COUPLE.	MAN (SOF): "MR. EISENHOWER, ARE WE GOING TO HAVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER WAR?"
CUT TO EISENHOWER.	EISENHOWER (SOF): "NO, NOT IF WE HAVE A SOUND PROGRAM FOR PEACE. AND I'LL ADD THIS, WE WON'T SPEND HUNDREDS OF BIL-LIONS AND STILL NOT HAVE ENOUGH TANKS AND PLANES FOR KOREA." (11)

Ike's opposite number on the Democratic ticket, Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson, also devised an extensive arg-spot campaign. Opting for a different stylistic approach, the Stevenson for President ads featured the candidate-on-camera, outlining his position on the issues, or used single constituent endorsements. In one such "I'm excited. . ." argumentative spot, a young woman with a plain curtain backdrop told voters:

VIDEO	AUDIO
WOMAN SITTING AT DESK. POSTER OF BALLOT FOR STEVENSON.	WOMAN (SOF): "I AM EXCITED ABOUT VOTING FOR GOV. STEVENSON FOR PRESIDENT. I THINK HE IS A NEW KIND OF MAN IN AMERICAN POLITICS. HE WILL BE A PRESIDENT FOR ALL THE

PEOPLE. STEVENSON'S TOLD THE TEXANS AND THE PEOPLE OF LOUISIANA AND CALIFORNIA THAT TIDE LAND OIL BELONGS NOT TO THEM ALONE BUT TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY. IN THE SOUTH HE HAS MADE A STRONG STATEMENT FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES AND FULL EQUALITY. THE FARMER, THE BUSINESSMAN, THE WORKMAN, THE VETERAN, TO EACH IN TURN HE HAS SAID THAT HE WILL REPRESENT NOT THEIR INTERESTS ALONE, BUT THE INTERESTS OF ALL OF US."

SHE SMILES

"THAT'S WHY I'M EXCITED ABOUT GOV. STEVENSON. HE WILL BE A PRESIDENT FOR ALL THE PEOPLE."(12)

As television's impact in the political campaign increased in subsequent campaigns, so did the sophistication of the arg-spot. In the 1960's, the spots summarized candidate's positions on defense, foreign policy, domestic programs, in addition to character traits. One such spot in the 1960 campaign featured Jacqueline Kennedy appealing in spanish for Hispanics to vote for her husband in the presidential election, because he pledged to keep "nuestro pais fuerte y el mundo seguro," ("our country strong and the world secure.") (13)

Ironically, it was the victim of the new medium's dominance in the political arena in 1960 who eventually developed the first full-scale paid media campaign. In his successful drive for the White House, Richard M. Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign reflected the growing demographic concerns of Madison Avenue. Nixon's slick, arg-spots were designed to convince specific groups that "Nixon's the One." (14)

Positive character traits replaced the position statement as the dominant theme of the arg-spot in the 1970's, due in part, to the public's disillusionment as a result of the Watergate scandal and the country's policies in Vietnam. Jimmy Carter's 1976 presidential campaign focused on the positive character traits of honesty, integrity, and identity with the people in advancing his general campaign theme of "why not the best?" Playing on this same theme, President Jerry Ford's mediated campaign also honed in on positive traits to advance the claim that, as a result of Ford's leadership, people were "feeling good about America." (15)

By 1980, political spots comprised a major part of the entire campaign budget. Arg spots not only addressed issues judged to be salient within the public, but also were specifically designed to re-awaken and massage the most basic and general patriotic and self-fulfilling images within the voters. Associations were made between particular candidates and an idealized and mediated perspective of reality more often akin to fiction than realistic vision. President Ronald Reagan's "Morning in America" spots typify this contemporary approach to the arg-spot:

VIDEO	AUDIO
BOAT SAILING ON LAKE.	SOFT BACKGROUND MUSIC. ANNOUNCER (VO): "IT'S MORNING AGAIN IN AMERICA.
MAN CLIMBING OUT OF TAXI WITH BRIEFCASE IN HAND; FARMER DRIVING TRACTOR; PAPERBOY RIDING BIKE ON WALK; MAN IN BUSINESS SUIT GETS RIDE	TODAY MORE MEN AND WOMEN WILL GO TO WORK, MORE THAN BEFORE IN OUR COUNTRY'S HISTORY.

WITH FRIEND.	
CAR PULLING TRAILER UP TO A HOUSE WITH WHITE PICKET FENCE	WITH INTEREST RATES ABOUT HALF THE RECORD HIGH OF 1980.
MEN CARRYING FURNITURE THROUGH PICKET FENCE	NEARLY 2000 FAMILIES WILL BUY NEW HOMES. MORE THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS.
GRANDMOTHER WATCHING HER GRANDDAUGHTER WALK DOWN THE AISLE.	THIS AFTERNOON 65 HUNDRED MEN AND WOMEN WILL BE MARRIED.
BRIDE AND GROOM STANDING AT ALTER; CLOSE UP ON BRIDE; BRIDE AND GROOM KISSING	AND WITH INFLATION AT LESS THAN HALF OF WHAT IT USED TO BE JUST FOUR YEARS AGO,
BRIDE AND GROOM RUNNING THROUGH GAUNTLET OF RICE GRANDMOTHER HUGS BRIDE.	WE CAN LOOK FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE TO THE FUTURE.
CLOSE UP OF WHITE HOUSE WITH THE AMERICAN FLAG BLOWING IN THE WIND.	IT'S MORNING AGAIN IN AMERICA.
YOUNG CHILDREN RAISING THE FLAG IN FRONT OF A LOG CABIN	AND UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT REAGAN,
ONE CHILD LOOKS UP IN AWE AT FLAG.	OUR COUNTRY'S PROUDER....
FIREMAN RAISING FLAG	STRONGER....
OLD MAN RAISING FLAG ON FRONT LAWN.	BETTER.
AMERICAN FLAG FILLS SCREEN	WHY WOULD WE EVER WANT TO RETURN TO THE WAY WE WERE LESS THAN FOUR SHORT YEARS AGO."
STILL OF REAGAN: (LETTERING) "PRESIDENT REAGAN LEADERSHIP THAT'S WORKING"	MUSIC FADES. (16)

The association between the candidate and icons of American life is designed to evoke the recognition within the public that a causal relationship does exist between the candidate's leadership and the idealized context as represented in the mediated message.

Presidential speechwriter Kenneth Khachigian credits the spot as a "postcard of America," characterized by "especially evocative emotional qualities."(17) Explaining this fantasy theme concept, William Henry III, in Visions of America, writes:

> . . .it's the ultimate goal of every national politician to embody so thoroughly the myths and traits of the country's idealized image of itself that a vote for Ronald Reagan would be a vote for America. (18)

Campaign As Argument

From the perspective of the campaign as argument, of equal importance to the salience of a particular issue to a voting decision is the perception on the part of the voter that the candidate has won the argument. The subject of the arg-spot is important only in as much as it contributes to a media campaign's winnable image. In other words, the issue around which the argument is centered is less important than the public perception that the candidate is advancing a winning case.

The candidate's choice of arg-spot content reflects a calculated judgment of one's strongest traits, positions and record or affiliations. The aim is to further define the candidate in the minds of the voters on issues/images that are judged to represent his/her strongest public appeal at the time of the election.

DIMENSIONS OF THE ARG-SPOTS

According to Joslyn's research, issues and images are frequently used to represent the candidate's campaign before the American public.(19) Such arg-spots represent the candidate's attempt to stake out the agenda in the campaign, and in doing so, to influence the mediated reality offered to the public by journalists covering the contest. Three salient characteritics that can impact on the the arg-spots overall success will be investigated - - - issue, image and visibility.

"Overstatement is the real meat of political rhetoric." (20)

Ken Khachigian

The **arg-issue** is the product of extensive polls and research into the public conscience, and reflects a consultant's skill in attracting voters to use such data to delineate and define a particular candidate. Accordingly, the candidate's goal is to be associated with an issue that advances his/her candidacy and one that improves the overall chance for success on election day. Harvey Englander explains, "Everything is decided by polls in terms of issues, positions, statements." (21)

The **arg-image** is designed to communicate or develop a candidate trait that is consonant with voter expectations and which reflects valued norms and behaviors within the general culture. Arg-image is developed in part by numerous variables such as

social and locational context - situation and actual site of the advertisement - and symbolic artifacts which surround the candidate in the spot. In reference to the importance of the arg-image. GOP Media consultant Robert Goodman states, "for years people have voted for honesty, competence, and charisma in that order." (22)

All arg-spots should enhance the visibility of the candidate, reinforce the candidate's name, and attempt to control the campaign agenda. The overall goal is to create awareness and maintain recall of the candidate's positions on specific issues that hopefully translate into increased support among the voting population.

Arg-visibility is reflected in the structured format of the arg-spot. It is the overall potential of the candidate to be seen by the voting public, and to build name and face recognition. Arg-visibility variables include the actual time in which the candidate is featured in the ad, the number of opportunities the voter has to see the candidate in the spot, and the number of times the candiate is name mentioned by an announcer.

These three dimensions of arg-spots are manipulated by the spot producers to provide a broadcast advertisement designed to enhance or even create the candidate's image. This mediated image

is deemed by political consultants to be one of the primary motivators of voters on election day.

A series of categorical variables that reflect these arg-spot dimensions - issue, image and visibility - were used in this study's content analytic procedure.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF CATEGORICAL VARIABLES

Each of the 29 arg-spots was analyzed in light of 12 separate variables. The variables are operationally defined for each dimension as follows:

Issue

1. **Geographical Distribution of Argument Spots** - The percentage of the total number of arg spots in the sample distributed across the four geographic regions, i.e. north, south, midwest, and west.

2. **Depth of Coverage of Content Issue** - The amount of information provided in the spot for any mentioned topic.

   A) Brief mention: Topic identified without any contextual information detailing the nature and impact of the issue.

   B) Fact rich: Detailed explanation of the issue.

Image

3. **Primary Topic Issue** - The first issue identified in the argument spot.

4. **Use of Endorsement** - The type and number of times any is individual shown in the spot who spoke in behalf of the candidate.

   A) Self Advocate: Candidate speaks in his own behalf.

   B) Constituent: A person supportive of the candidate speaking in behalf of the candidate.

C) Politician: An identified politician endorsing the candidate.

D) Newsmedia: An identified media endorsing a candidate.

5. **Endorser Time** - The total seconds each endorser was on camera.

6. **Use of President** - The number of times and the total number of seconds President Reagan was on camera speaking in behalf of the candidate.

7. **Symbolic Artifacts** - Graphic references clearly intended to evoke a desired image in relation to a particular subject. Three categories were coded:

   A) Office related: Objects that denote the senatorial status of the candidate or senator's desk or chambers.

   B) Party related: Objects that indicate republican affiliation; banners and posters, republican elephant.

   C) State related: State seal or flag.

8. **Location Context** - The first physical environment in which the candidate is seen in the arg spot.

   A) Office: Candidate shown in his/her office.

   B) Rally: Candidate surrounded by political supporters making a speech.

   C) Outdoor: Any outdoor, urban or suburban setting.

   D) Rural: Outdoor countryside setting.

   E) Home: Candidate shown at or within own residence.

   F) Studio: Any contrived indoor setting produced for the purpose of presenting the candidate on camera.

9. **Social Context** - The identity of individual(s) featured on camera in the spot.

   A) Alone: Candidate on camera by him/herself.

   B) Family: Immediate family member.

   C) Constituent group: A gathering of political supporters.

   D) Politicians/government: Other political or identified governmental officials.

E) Business: A business office or industrial setting.

F) Community leaders: Non-governmental opinion leaders and social organizational personnel.

Visibility

10. **Candidate on Camera Time** - The total number of seconds that the candidate is shown on camera.

11. **Length of Arg Spot** - The duration of arg spots in seconds.

12. **Verbal Mentions of Candidate Name** - The number of times the candidate's name is mentioned by an announcer.

CODING PROCEDURES

The arg-spots were quantified using the above mentioned code book by four trained coders. Two coding teams were employed. Each team included two graduate students with training in research methods, and who were familiar with the process and techniques of content analysis. All coders attended multiple training sessions conducted by the principle investigators, to insure that the coders were aware of the operational definitions of the categorical variables, and the rules of classification used in the analysis. Prior to the collection of data, a sample of 25 randomly selected spots were coded and discussed in order to assure that the coding procedures were objective and reliable. Interjudge reliability coefficients reflected a pi coefficient of .72. (23)

The complete sample of one hundred and one political ads were divided, and each team independently coded the spots that were

randomly assigned to them. Coders entered the data representing each variable onto a pre-printed code sheet. The completed data set was entered into a machine readable file.

Sub-routines of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) were used to generate the information that was utilized by the investigators to develop the content and format trends found in the advertisements described in this paper. (24)

RESULTS

Issue

Geographic Distribution of Arg Spot

The subfile of 29 argument ads was broken down into four distinct geographic regions as follows - **north: 1 ; south: 11; midwest: 6; and west 11.** Within the total sample of 101 senatorial ads ten percent of all spots in the north were of the argument type. Arg ads comprised 26.2% in the south, 37.5% in the midwest and, 50.0% in the west. The percentages reflect the weight given to the argumentative spot compared to the other types of spots produced in each region. (25) Although only one arg spot occured in the north, data is reported for the region in the following analysis. However, few conclusions can be drawn concerning northern argument spots.

Depth of Coverage of Content Issues by Geo-Regions

TABLE 1

	N	S	MW	W*	Freq
Brief mention of topic	1	9	6	7	23
Fact Rich analysis	0	2	0	4	6
Total Spots	1	11	6	11	29

*N = north; S = south MW = midwest; W = west

The issues convered in the argument spots, tended to include only brief mention of the topic, without further amplification.(See table 1) This finding is consistent with the work of R. A. Joslyn who concluded that most television spots include only a vague positioning on an issue. (26)

Only two spots in the south provided "fact rich" or indepth analysis of the issue. The west favored the "fact rich" approach to the topic most frequently, with over half of the arg ads providing detailed explanation of the issue addressed to the voters. For example, Colorado Senator Armstrong told his constituents:

VIDEO	AUDIO
WINDOW OF ARMSTRONG SPEAKING; LETTERING: "BILL ARMSTRONG: U.S. SENATE," ZOOM OUT UNTIL LETTERING DISAPPEARS.	ARMSTRONG (SOF): "IN THE LAST 20 YEARS FEDERAL SPENDING HAS INCREASED 880%.

SHOT OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLE WITH HEADLINE, "ARMSTRONG URGES 'BOLD' MOVE TO REDUCE DEFICIT." COLORADO SPRINGS GAZETTE TELEGRAPH.	
CLOSE ON ARMSTRONG.	I'M HERE TRYING TO KEEP THIS THING TOGETHER AND TO PREVENT THE ECONOMY FROM ROLLING OFF THE EDGE OF A CLIFF. AND I BELIEVE THE BEST WAY TO DO THAT IS FOR US TO TAKE A BOLD STROKE RIGHT NOW
SHOT OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLE WITH HEADLINE, "ARMSTRONG READY TO STEP ON TOES TO REDUCE DEFICIT."	TO GET THAT DEFICIT UNDER CONTROL.
ARMSTRONG: MEDIUM SHOT	AND I THINK THAT'S A GOOD POLICY. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT'S GOOD POLITICS AND DON'T TOO MUCH CARE TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH."
KEYED WINDOW OF ARMSTRONG (LETTERING) "BILL ARMSTRONG: U.S. SENATE." ARMSTRONG AD:	MUSIC FADES. (27)

Even though Diamond and Bates contend that argument spots often touch the emotional "hot buttons" of the viewer, none of the commercials analyzed were found to be primarily comprised of Affective Appeals (Emotion Rich). (28) While an issue in itself might be couched in an emotive context, the major appeal within the arg-spots tended to be issue-oriented, rather than pathetic in tone. An arg-spot of Texas' Phil Gramm offers the reader an example of an arg-issue developed within an emotive theme:

AUDIO	VIDEO
PHIL GRAMM SITTING AT DESK WITH SOCIAL SECURITY CHECK	GRAMM (SOF): "MY MOMMA WORKED 39 YEARS AS A PRACTICAL NURSE CARRYING BEDPANS

CLOSE ON CHECK	TO EARN THIS $333.00 A MONTH FROM SOCIAL SECURITY
CLOSE ON GRAMM	AND I'M NEVER GONNA LET ANYBODY TAKE THIS CHECK AWAY FROM MY MOMMA. IF YOU'VE EARNED SOCIAL SECURITY OR FEDERAL RETIREMENT OR RAILROAD RETIREMENT OR YOU'VE EARNED VETERANS BENEFITS BY SERVING OUR COUNTRY, I'M NEVER GONNA LET ANYBODY TAKE THOSE AWAY FROM YOU EITHER, AND YOU CAN TAKE THAT TO THE BANK."
STILL OF PHIL GRAMM; (LETTERING) "COMMON SENSE UNCOMMON COURAGE."	ANNOUNCER: "PHIL GRAMM FOR UNITED STATES SENATE." (29)

Primary Topic Issue

It is assumed that the first issue mentioned in the arg-spots was considered to be the most salient issue within the voting public by the candidates and producers at the time the ad was made. That is, the topic perceived to be the most important would be placed at the beginning of the spot to enhance exposure, even among those viewers who may not pay attention to the entire spot. The first topic may have been considered a high impact issue because of its ability to generate and focus attention due to personal interest within the voters. As indicated in Table 2, 16 different issues were covered across all geographic regions. The most frequent lead issue dealt with the economy, a topic most often featured in the south and midwest. The second most frequently utilized lead issue was character trait - honesty and integrity - predominantly found in the south.

In terms of regional generalizations, the midwest spots tended to feature topics that had personal relevance to the voting constituency - farming, business, the economy, taxes and crime. Midwest candidate arg-spots for Philip Jepsen and Charles Percy described the senators as experienced voices in Washington who still were in touch with their constituencies. A Jepsen arg spot featured the candidate-as-self advocate telling voters:

> " . . . Sure there are problems, and I know that many of you are facing tough times. But together we're going to work them out. . . and we're going to see to it that our farmers get a fair shake, our children the best education possible, and our senior citizens the care and the protection that they deserve. . . These are not words to me, this is my faith and I think it is yours, too." (30)

The southern arg-spot topics centered on the economy and the candidate's personal character traits. Arg-spots in the sample were complimentary and supportive of the President's programs. Western arg-spots reflected a greater diversity of topics, and a proclivity for more specifically designed ads for particular interest groups. In addition, as in the Armstrong spot, some of these GOP ads directly countered the Reagan administration's stand on issues.

TABLE 2:

First Issue Mentioned by Geo-regions

	N	S	MW	W	FREQ
Individual policy	1				1
Social Security		1		1	2
Military				1	1

Business			1		1
Economy		3	1	3	7
Tax		1	1	1	3
Crime			1		1
Spending		1			1
Handicapped				1	1
Environment				1	1
Child laws				1	1
Farms			1		1
Arms Control		1			1
Women's Issues				1	1
Character Traits		3	1	1	5
Total Topics/Spots	1	11	6	11	29

IMAGE

Use of Endorsement

Table 3 includes data on the type and number of endorsers in arg-spots. The most frequent format among all geo-regions featured the candidate as self advocate. Constituents speaking in behalf of the candidate occurred most often in the west. For example, the arg spots for Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico, featured a constituent-on-street interview format which offered the viewer divergent "reasons" why Domenici deserved re-election. 78% of the endorsements in the south were self advocates. Victor Ashe of Tennessee told viewers he "was bull-dog tough and downright Tennessee." Although the sex of an endorser was not tabulated, it was noted by the coders that the preponderance of endorsers were male.

TABLE 3:

Total Number of Endorsments by Geo-region

	N	S	MW	W	FREQ
Self Advocate	2	7	4	8	21
Constituent			3	5	8
Politician		2		1	3
Media				3	3
Total*	2	9	7	17	35
Total spots	1	11	6	11	29

*Not equal to total spots due to absence or presence of multiple endorsers per ad.

Endorser on Camera Time

Out of the total time of 980 seconds devoted to arg-spots across all regions, 246 seconds or 25.10 percent of this time featured endorsers on camera. Therefore, endorsers were looked upon by the respective consultants as important in developing and promoting the candidates stand on issues.

Endorsers are frequently chosen for their visibility and credibility within the largest voting population. Of the 246 argument seconds, 59.35 percent of this endorser spot time was delegated to the western region where endorsers tended to be on camera more frequently and for a longer time.

TABLE 4:

Endorser (other than candidate) Seconds on Camera Time by Geo-region

	N	S	MW	W	Total
Average seconds		5.5	7.4	8.6	
Total seconds		50	67	129	246.00
Percent of Total		20.33	27.24	59.35	100.00
No. of Endorsments	0	7	9	15	31
Total Spots	1	11	6	11	29

Use of the President

As indicated in Table 5, the president was featured on camera as an endorser, only in the southern region, in behalf of Senators Strom Thurmond and Jesse Helms. In these spots, Reagan was shown on four occasions for a total of 61 seconds, with an average camera time of 15.2 seconds. In one 30 second spot, the president spoke on camera in a-live-camera actuality for virtually the entire ad extolling the record of Senator Jesse Helms. The remaining three presidential endorsements presented a picture of Reagan with a voice over endorsement for Senator Thurmond.

TABLE 5:

President on Camera Time in Seconds by Geo-region

	N	S	MW	W
Average	0	15.2	0	0
Sum	0	61	0	0
No. of Appearances	0	4	0	0
Total spots	1	11	6	11

In the thirty-second Helms' arg-spot which features the President, Reagan accentuates the strong alliance between the two politicians on the tax issue, and includes a descriptive biblical reference most probably included to help activate the Senator's fundamentalist constituency:

AUDIO	VIDEO
PRESIDENTIAL SEAL	ANNOUNCER: "THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES."
CUT TO RONALD REAGAN AT PODIUM-GRAPHIC: "A SALUTE TO JESSE" OVER PODIUM.	REAGAN (SOF): "FOR YEARS JESSE HELMS HAS BEEN TELLING THE TRUTH. GOVERNMENT CAN ONLY SPEND WHAT IT BORROWS OR TAXES AWAY; AND WORKING AMERICANS WHO PAY THIS NATION'S BILLS NEED HIGHER TAXES LIKE THEY NEED A PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS.
CUT TO SENATOR HELMS AND MRS. REAGAN AT TABLE LISTENING.	WITH THE UNWAVERING SUPPORT FROM JESSE
CUT TO REAGAN AT PODIUM	WE PASSED THE FIRST DECENT TAX RATE REDUCTION FOR EVERY WORKING AMERICAN SINCE 1964."
CUT TO STILL OF JESSE HELMS	ANNOUNCER: "JESSE HELMS: WORKING FOR ALL OF US IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE." (31)

Symbolic Artifact

As indicated in Table 6, symbolic artifacts that reflect the power and trappings of the office were used primarily in the south. References to party identification were employed as an attention directing device to reinforce the candidate image with that of the national Republican Party. This connotative symbolism was predominant in the south and west regions. State

symbols were used in all regions except the north, where no symbols were employed.

TABLE 6:

Frequency of Symbolic Artifacts by Geo-region

	N	S	MW	W	FREQ
Office related		1			1
Party related		3		2	5
State related		1	2	1	4
Total Symbols	0	5	2	3	10
Total Spots	1	11	6	11	29

Location and Social Context

The primary locations in which the candidate was featured in the argument spots varied across the geographic regions, but the most frequent location was a studio setting. (see table 7) However, in the south, the candidate was also often shown in an office setting, or at a political events surrounded by constituents. For example, both Senator Helms and Phil Gramm were featured at a rally, with supporters as a backdrop.

The candidate was shown at home only in the west, where, after the studio location, it was the most frequent context for the arg-spot. Senator Al Simpson of Wyoming was featured with his wife Ann in the living room, telling voters how "they had tried to do a good job and would like the chance of doing it again."

The primary social context in which the candidate appears among all spots was - alone. (see table 7) Government officials were present on camera with the candidate only in the south, where President Reagan appeared with Sen. Jesse Helms. The candidate was surrounded by family members only in the north and west.

In summary, in the west, the candidate was most frequently shown alone at home or in a studio. In the midwest, the predominant contextual settings was either the candidate alone in a studio, or featured in a town meeting with supporters as background. The south favored the candidate alone, either at work or at a rally within a context of constituents.

TABLE 7:

Primary Locations by Geo-region

	N	S	MW	W	FREQ
Office		3	1	2	6
Rally	1	3			4
Outdoors		1			1
Rural			1		1
Home				3	3
Studio		4	3	6	13
Town meeting			1		1
Total Locations	1	11	6	11	29
Total Spots	1	11	6	11	29

TABLE 8:

Primary Social Context by Geo-region

	N	S	MW	W	FREQ

Alone		8	5	9	22
Family	1			1	2
Constituent group			1	1	2
Government		3			3
Total Soc. context	1	11	6	11	29
Total Spots	1	11	6	11	29

Visibility

Candidate on Camera Time

Length of Arg Spot

Visibility, or the voter's overall awareness of the candidate, was derived by two variables: 1) the number of opportunities the voters have to see the candidate on camera, and 2) the duration of each such exposure. Visibility measured only one aspect of awareness of the candidate, because the current data does not account for the frequency, or number of times that each arg-spot was actually broadcast during the campaign.

The use of candidate as a self-advocate provides greater visibility to the voters, and is a dominant mode in the spots studied. (See Table 9) Six hundred and seventy seconds, or 60% of the total 980 seconds devoted to arg commercials, were consumed by candidate-on-camera (o/c). By this critera, actual o/c time was considered an important technique in enhancing the visibility of the candidate. The percentage of o/c time of total

arg-spot time was calculated from the data.

O/c was proportionately the greatest in the midwest where out of 210 seconds devoted to arg spots, 136 or 65% of the time, the candidate was on camera. While the south had a greater number of commercial seconds (360), the southern candidate had a slightly smaller proportion of on air time - 63%. O/c time per geo-region, as displayed in Table 9, was greatest in the south. The west had the highest number of candidate exposure opportunities in the arg spots, but the lowest average candidate o/c at 50.30%.

TABLE 9:

Candidate on Camera Time by Seconds by Geo-region

	N	S	MW	W	ROW TTL
Total spots	1	11	6	11	29
Candidate o/c opportunity	4	21	26	31	82
Length of o/c time	30	226	136	196	670
Average exposure time	7.5	10.52	5.23	6.32	
Total arg spot time	30	360	210	390	990

Mention of Candidate Name

Repetition of the candidate's name is a production technique, also a dominant characteristic of the I.D. spot, that is used to reinforce name recognition in the voter population. The supposition is that the more often a voter is exposed to a candidate's name, the greater the potential that the voter will

remember and recall the candidate.

All regions used voice-over of candidate name. (See table 10) This technique, used to increase name recognition, was most often used in the South and Midwest. The south arg-spots used the technique on average 3.85 times per spot.

TABLE 10:

Mentions of Candidate's Name

	N	S	MW	W
No. of Mentions	4	42	14	36
Average per region		3.85	2.33	3.27
Percent of total mention	4.7	43.75	14.58	37.50
Total spots	1	11	6	11

THE ARG-SPOT: THE CONSULTANT'S PERSPECTIVE

> "Politics is not mechanics and technology, but flesh and blood and poetry." (32)
> Kenneth Khachigian

According to President Reagan's speechwriter, Kenneth Kachigian, who also scripted the 1984 presidential campaign spots, the overriding two requirements in crafting a successful campaign message are the ability to select "one or two issues that advance a fundamental message," and "to write for the ear, not the print." Further expounding on this theme, Kachigian describes "politics as a bean bag," suggesting success to be determined, in part, by the candidate's ability to devise a mediated campaign to

mesh with public opinion as well as shape the campaign agenda.

What are the predominant opinions regarding this study's findings on arg-spots among consultants from throughout the country? What role does the arg-spot play in the overall campaign strategy? Are there substantive reasons for the noted differences in image, issue, and visibility, among geo-regions as suggested in this paper?

These and other pertinent questions were presented to some of the country's leading political consultants in the effort to better understand the philosophical underpinnings of today's arg-spot. Those interviewed include: Dino Sader, Washington, D.C.; Harvey Englander, Newport Beach, CA; and Robert Dow, Des Moines, IA.

"Southerners want to know the character and personality of the candidate. . . they want to know what other southerners think of people running for office." (33)

Dino Sader

Washington based Dino Sader, who has advised candidates throughout the country including his native south, favors a combination of argument and attack ads in campaigns. Sader asserts there are "intelligent and regional subtle differences throughout the country that have to be taken into consideration when formulating the campaign." Concurring, Newport Beach based Harvery Englander states: "There is more political sophistication 100 miles from each coast than anywhere else in between." Asserting there to be "stylized differences between

regions," Iowa's Robert Dow argues that failing to realize these differences can doom a candidate's media campaign. Dow identifies his 1984 counterpart, Washington based Robert Goodman's failure to understand the complex character of Iowa as contributing to Senator Philip Jepsen's defeat: "Goodman relied on outdated generalized stereotypes of presenting flat country-bumpkin types in his constituent commercials, and that was insulting to the Iowa voters." (34) Therefore, the mistake of not using what Englander asserts to be the consultant's primary tool - "polling and on-the-spot analysis to note particular geographical differences," can hinder the media campaign.

Explaining why the economy was found to be a lead arg-issue in the midwest, Dow identifies the Iowa and Illinois arg-spots as mediated attempts to address the farm crisis and other serious economic problems of the region.

The prevalence of arg-image characteristics, i.e. personal character traits, primarily in the south, meshes with Sader's reading of the region over a seventeen year period. "In general, the south is a friendlier place than most other regions, and Sader adds, "there is more of an interest in the character and personality of people running for office." In addition, the tendency to feature candidates at rallies and include symbolic artifacts reflects the recognition that "southerners want to know what other southerners think, and are proud of the region

and heritage." Accordingly, such a context helps satisfy this regional need.

Emphasizing the positive function of the arg-spot in "giving the public a anchor point of what the candidate is all about - his character, his vision, his record, and his policies," Sader further explains that President Reagan was prominent in southern GOP arg-spots due to his overall popularity in the region among both Republicans and Democrats. "Reagan was always far ahead of Mondale," Sader states "so in tighter races like North Carolina where Senator Helms was runnning against Jim Hunt, the Reagan endorsement helped Helms." Within the arg-spot, Helms association with a highly credible source was judged by the consultant as a motivator to solidify Reagan supporters of both parties behind the GOP incumbent. Senator Helms. Harvey Englander concurs that the ultimate decision on presidential endorsement is determined by the president's strength in the area: "The President, who made himself readily available, was used wherever he was popular; wherever he was judged by the polls to be a benefit to the candidate."

"Issues are many times inherent in candidate character traits like good old fashioned midwestern values, and this is where Senator Jepsen came up lacking."

Robert Dow

In midwestern races where the presidential contest was much closer, Reagan was featured less frequently in the arg-spots. For instance, in Iowa, Senator Philip Jepsen's ad campaign for

re-election did not include a presidential endorsement. Robert Dow concludes that it is unlikely Reagan would have had a similar effect in Iowa as he had in the south, because the president's farm policies had dampened his own support.

Furthermore in the wake of revelations during the campaign that Senator Jepsen had frequented an Iowa massage parlor on several occasions, the incumbent faced a serious character problem. Dow's analysis of polls helped define the dilemma facing Iowa voters who, on election day, came around to supporting the President but could not support Jepsen: "They basically said, I am not totally happy with Ronald Reagan, but I'll vote for him because he's the President, but I'll be damned if I'll vote for that Senator, too." The consultant adds that while Jepsen's commercials continued to stress particular issues, the outcome of the election turned on the character issue. "Issues are many times inherent in character traits, like good old fashioned midwestern values, and this is where Philip Jepsen came up lacking."

The west's tendency to address more topics and heed the concerns of special interest groups, even to include spots that reflected independence from the White House policies, was summed up by Englander as indicative of the "heterogeneous diversity and sophistication of the voters in the regions."

"Decisions on self-advocate or use of constituents or politicians is dependent solely on what the polls say."

Harvey Englander

The candidate as "self advocate," as the most favored type of endorsement in all geo-regions and particularly the south, was identified by Dow as indicative of a growing trend in polispots: "There is a move to put the candidate out front, for him to push his own effort." Furthermore, the Iowa consultant views constituent ads as "old hat." Sader explains the popular self advocate format as a recognition that, "voters deserve to see and hear and know what a candidate looks like on the issues." Harvey Englander asserts the endorsment style to depend solely on the voter's needs as reflected in political polling.

Studio contexts, which Dow judges to be inferior to modes such as cinema verite and other styles which depict the candidate in action, nonetheless provide possible insight into the fast paced dynamics of the political campaign: "In the Harkin- Jepsen race, which was hard hitting and featured negative ads on both sides, the studio setting provided the quickest and most economical way to counteract the charges in the ever present attempt to control the campain agenda."

In terms of the arg-image characteristic, Dow attempts to gauge the candidate's strengths by polling the constituency to assess the candidate's realistic capabilities: "I have the candidate walk and talk on camera, and then stylize the entire approach based on the candidate and situation." Dow adds, "The one thing that you can't impose on a candidate is a style that is not

consistent with his own character - it just won't fly with the public."

A major point of agreement among all three consultants is a preference for a positive campaign, with arg-spots comprising the basic thrust of the mediated message. Nonetheless, given the perspective of the campaign as an argument to be won, the prepared candidate must also have an arsenal of attack or negative spots at his/her disposal. Dow states: "The real deterrent in keeping the campaign positive is the knowledge by your opponent that if another tack is taken, if things get off track, that you are not only capable, but very good at winning a negative campaign and will not hesitate to launch it."

Conclusion

Arg-spots and Political Communication

From the researchers' perspective of the political campaign as an argumentative conflict manifest through the mediated debate, the arg-spot plays a vital role in presenting selected and well crafted arguments to the voting public.

Of equal importance to the salience of a particular issue to a voting decision are particular character traits judged by the public to be fitting to a candidate for office. Analysis of the particular constituency may help provide the aspirant with

insights on the argumentative case to be waged over the air waves in the attempt to win the mediated debate and be victorious on election day.

The content analysis of the 1984 GOP Senatorial Arg-spots reveals important similarities and distinctions across geo-regions on characteristics such as arg-issue, arg-image and arg-visibility. It reflects common themes as well as particular nuances of each region, suggesting that todays political consultant and candidate, equipped with the state-of-the-art technology, are still engaged in the same process suggested by Aristotle in the Politics over two thousand years ago - audience analysis. (35)

Currently much of the public focus is on negative advertising. (36) Yet, there are indications that, like other advertising techniques, it will cycle in and out of favor as a preferred tactic, without legislation and the dangerous precident such action might establish.

Further investigation into the technique of arg-spots and their effect represents a positive step in re-establishing a healthy mediated deliberative diet for the voting public. As political consultants are quick to point out, it is only when one side becomes frustrated with the arg-spot ability to influence the voter that an attack or negative tact is adopted. Futher study of the polispot can contribute to the goal of an enlightened public whose decisions are made more on facts than fears.

NOTES

1. Information contained in a personal interview with Edwin Diamond, October 31, 1985, with Greg Payne. All subsequent comments from Edwin Diamond are from this interview.

2. Information contained in telephone interviews with various consultants including Michael Goldman, Boston; Harvey Englander, Newport Beach, CA; Dino Sader, Washington, D.C.; Robert Dow, Des Moines, IA, October 1985.

3. Ibid.

4. R.A. Joslyn, "The Content of Political Spot Ads," Journalism Quarterly, vol. 57, 1980, p.92.; John Danforth and Ernest Hollings, "The Clean Campaign Act," U. S. Senate Bill S1310, Summer, 1985; Diamond interview.

5. Diamond interview.

6. Diamond, Edwin, and Stephen Bates, The Spot: The Rise and Fall of Political Advertising on Television, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), p 311.

7. J. Gregory Payne and Robert A. Baukus, "Trend Analysis of the 1984 GOP Senatorial Spot," paper presented at the McElroy Symposia, "Current Trends in Broadcast Advertising," University of Northern Iowa, April 10, 1985.

8. Robert A. Baukus, J. Gregory Payne, and Marc S. Reisler, "Negative Polispots: Mediated Arguments in the Political Arena," Argument and Social Practice: Proceedings of the Fourth SCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation, Ed. J.R. Cox, M.O. Sillars, and G.B. Walker, (SCA Annandale, VA: October 15, 1985).

9. Diamond and Bates, The Spot, pp. 302-345.

10. Diamond and Bates, The Spot, pp. 45-60.

11. Dwight D. Eisenhower presidential spot, political spot collection of Emerson College News Study Group, Institute For Communication Studies, Boston. All spots mentioned in this paper were transcribed from this collection.

12. Adlai Stevenson presidential spot, 1952.

13. Diamond and Bates, The Spot, p. 109.

14. Diamond and Bates, The Spot, pp. 163-170.

15. Diamond and Bates, The Spot, pp. 239-247; William Devlin, "Contrasts in the Presidential Campaign Communication of 1976," Central States Speech Journal, vol. 28, p.245.

16. Ronald Reagan presidential spot, 1984.

17. Kenneth Khachigian, remarks to the John F. Kennedy School of Government Study Group, on Speechwriting, Harvard University, October 30, 1985.

18. Henry, William A., III, Visions of America: How We Saw the 1984 Election, (Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston/NY, 1985), p. 3.

19. Joslyn, p. 92.

20. Khachigian remarks, October, 1985.

21. Information contained in a telephone interview with Harvey Englander on October 30, 1985, with Lorna Schmidt. All subsequent comments from Harvey Englander are from this interview.

22. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, May 4, 1974, p. 1105.

23. W. Scott, "Reliability of Content Analysis: The Case of Nominal Scale Coding," Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 17, 1955, pp. 321-325.

24. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Ed. N.H. Nie, C.H. Hull, J.G. Jenkins, K. Steinbrenner, and D.H. Bent, (2nd Ed. McGraw/Hill, NY: 1975).

25. Payne/Baukus, p. 8.

26. Joslyn, p. 94.

27. Bill Armstrong, Colorado senatorial spot, 1984.

28. Diamond and Bates, The Spot, p. 311.

29. Phil Gramm, Texas senatorial spot, 1984.

30. Philip Jepsen, Iowa senatorial spot, 1984.

31. Jesse Helms, North Carolina senatorial spot, 1984.

32. Khachigian, October 1985.

33. Information contained in telephone interview with Dino Sader on October 30, 1985 with Lorna Schmidt. All subsequent comments from Dino Sader are from this interview.

34. Information contained in telephone interview with Robert Dow on October 30, 1985 with Lorna Schmidt. All subsequent comments from Robert Dow are from this interview.

35. Aristotle, The Works of Aristotle, Tr. J.A. Smith and W.D. Ross, (Oxford Press, Oxford), 1931.

36. Danforth and Hollings, S-1310, 1985. See Baukus, Reisler, and Fayne.